

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
M.V.A. FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

by

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF VISUAL ARTS

IN

PAINTING
DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend
to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a
thesis entitled:

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The University of Alberta

RELEASE FORM

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DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

GRADUATE STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections, University of Alberta, as part of the Master of Visual Arts Thesis Collection:

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>MEDIUM</u>	<u>SIZE</u>
1. Expansion (Canal Bank II)	1990	Oil/Mixed media on canvas	87" x 66"
2. Red Moon II	1990	Watercolor	9" x 11"

#1 returned to Melissa Malkas
Too large for University Collections storage facilities.

W. J. G.
June 15 '90

ARTISTIC STATEMENT

The experience of nature forms the center of my art. Interacting with this central experience are the ideas of abstract things which are of an universal nature and the concept of the symbol as something which stands for or represents something else. Although I have a specific interest in these ideas, I am not trying to achieve a direct one to one correspondence between these ideas and the imagery or process of my painting. Instead, I am using these concepts as a basis for questioning, rethinking, and evaluating the content of my artwork and my approach to the painting process. I view the painting process as an avenue of learning and as a means of extending the boundaries of my awareness of existence and of my identity within nature.

The experience of nature encompasses several levels of meaning which may be of a physical, emotional and spiritual context. Although the experience of nature is subjective and varies individually, I feel that there are aspects of this experience which may be interpreted universally by alluding to basic concepts such as emotion, spirituality, and the relationship between humanity and the earth. Because these concepts constitute core concepts of the human psyche which have remained relatively unchanged throughout time, I feel that they are qualities, things which have always existed and remain constant.

Because there are many things that extend beyond the range of human understanding and reason, symbols are used to represent concepts that we cannot fully define or comprehend. One definition of a symbol is that "a word or image is a symbol when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider unconscious aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained... As the mind explores the symbol it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason."

Goethe placed a great deal of emphasis upon dreams which he viewed as "mediators" between the uncontainable power of emotion and the logic and rational which supposedly dominates our lives. Furthermore, dream imagery becomes a symbol of the unconscious and a threshold between the conscious and the unconscious. Because my painting process relies on a constant interplay between the conscious and the unconscious, I believe that the paintings become a visible record of that exchange: a transformation of intuition, instinct, and emotion into a concrete physical reality.

Although it has been common for specific objects in nature to become symbolic, I believe that symbolism plays a different role in my painting. I believe that through the symbolic process and the representation of nature, the paintings themselves become symbolic records of the soul of the earth and the symbolic way in which our psyches are bound up with the phenomenon of nature. This is similar to the Romantic attitude which views nature as being neither passive nor neutral, but rather as a force which interacts with humanity. Yet, we have abused this relationship, creating a rift between the earth and ourselves. The last century of technology has permeated the earth with the threat of extinction.

In Goethe's philosophy, a symbol begins with a specific idea, experience or image, and through internalization of this particular it becomes a revelation of the universal, "the inner law of the symbol." For a true symbol, the particular represents the universal not as a dream or shadow, but as the living and instantaneous revelation of the "unfathomable" in our existence. With its intensity the common everyday experiences of nature into an imagery that is symbolic not only of the energy inherent in nature, but also of the life force or soul of the earth, a life force which is in a state of jeopardy.

The imagery in my paintings often refers to specific natural occurrences, such as the sun, wind, and rain; elements or absolutes which have always existed in nature. But because nature is being continually assaulted by humanity's destructive tendencies and drive for dominance, these basic elements are being adversely affected. This dilemma has produced a paradox which emerges in my painting. On one hand, nature is a tremendous force, an embodiment of beauty and spirituality and yet I feel compelled to represent it in its disturbed, unnatural state, a state of agitation and potential dissolution.

If I were to characterize the mood of the world, I would say it was marked by a state of anxiety, a self-inflicted anxiety brought on by lack of responsibility and lack of empathy. The role of empathy allows for the ability or power to project one's consciousness into nature and to identify with all living things. Ideally, this would lead to a heightened awareness and sensitivity to nature, an understanding that all life forms are intricately related, and that every destructive act has repercussions throughout the universe. It seems as if we have lost this ability to reconcile ourselves within the cosmos. As D.H. Lawrence says, "We and the cosmos are one. The cosmos is a vast living body of which we are still parts. The sun is a great heart whose tremors run through our smallest veins. The moon is a great gleaming nerve center from which we quiver...but, we have lost the cosmos. The sun strengthens us no more, neither does the moon."

Melissa Malkas

Master List - Slides

	<u>Title</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Year</u>
#1	Twisted Road	Oil on canvas	66" x 78"	1989
#2	Towards the Center	Oil on masonite	72" x 48"	1989
#3	Dark Wind	Oil on canvas	66" x 78"	1989
#4	Rain	Oil / mixed media on canvas	48" x 48"	1990
#5	Falling Light	Oil on canvas	66" x 78"	1990
#6	Circling Horses	Oil / mixed media on canvas	84" x 66"	1990
#7	Blackened Cloud	Oil on canvas	96" x 78"	1990
#8	Expansion	Oil / mixed media on canvas	87" x 66"	1990
#9	Suspended Clouds	Oil / mixed media on canvas	78" x 48"	1990

